

HYGIENE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

By EVELEEN HARRISON

Graduate Post-Graduate Hospital, New York

(Continued from page 771)

ONE of our clever writers is credited with the statement that "people will never be satisfied with the weather until each man makes his own weather and keeps it to himself." Perhaps that remark might be qualified in reference to the intense heat of our summer days, for surely there are few people who do not agree that it is hard to bear even under the most favorable circumstances, when, in the best of health, one is enabled to escape the stifling heat of the city by trips into the country, refreshing plunges into sea or river, sails over the breezy surface of the water, or drives through country lanes overshadowed by swaying branches. But suppose you take the place of the invalid chained to a bed of suffering, bound to look on the same surroundings day in and day out, tired—oh, so tired!—of bearing pain, the heat permeating every part of the suffering body, sheets and pillows hot and moist with perspiration, turning from side to side to search out a cool spot, craving a breath of country air and a glimpse of green fields, occasionally dropping into an uneasy dose, only to be awakened by the footsteps of a curious fly engaged in measuring the length of your nose, and bringing you back to the realization of what it means to be sick in the city during the intense heat of summer.

Let us look up all the points of comfort that we can think of for the benefit of our poor, suffering brothers and sisters.

In my opinion bathing—and lots of it—comes first. What can equal the morning bath, fresh nightgown and sheets, after a hot, restless night. For two or three hours the patient will feel cool and comfortable; then the heat of the day comes on and a return of the restlessness. A few moments' rubbing of the back, arms, and legs with alcohol, in long, quiet strokes, a plentiful supply of powder, and the hot, moist drawsheet and pillow-case replaced by fresh ones, and, further, should the day be unusually warm, a change of nightgown, will give the touch of freshness necessary to the enjoyment of the midday dinner.

About five o'clock comes another restless period. The day has seemed long, the heat is great, and the patient exhausted. A bath all over with warm water, with a little lavender-water or toilet ammonia, will be received gratefully, the long, gentle strokes of sponge and towel being soothing to tired nerves.

Again, just before the lights are lowered for the night, the ever-ready alcohol will rest the tired back and legs, and the drawsheets, pillow-case, and nightgown that have been airing since noon will make the bed over in a most refreshing manner.

It is a great relief, during the very hot days, not to have the bed-clothes rest on the patient, even when they are reduced to a single sheet. To avoid this, carry them over the foot of the bed instead of tucking in under the mattress.

We may add to the comfort of the head by either braiding the hair in two braids well to each side, or fastening it high up on top of the head, so that the neck and lower part of the head be left uncovered.

A curtain might hang at the door, which could then remain open all the time; and if the transept over the door—when there is one—is removed and the window opened wide, top and bottom, the room will be as fresh as you can make it.

A word of warning, however; with doors and windows wide open and little or no bedcoverings on the patient, during these hot days a breeze may spring up at any moment, when the nurse is not on guard, and how mortifying to have the patient “take cold,” to say nothing of the danger? So I should advise that even in the hottest weather a light summer blanket be near enough for the patient to reach in case of emergency.

Move the bed out a good distance from the wall, even into the middle of the room, if necessary, to secure all the air that is to be found.

Another scheme that has proved restful is to have two beds in the room side by side, so that the patient may be moved from one to the other morning and evening, allowing the mattress as well as the sheets time to cool off when not in use.

Everything not absolutely needful in the room—especially a small room—might be dispensed with in the hot weather.

William Morris tells us to “have nothing in the house that we do not know to be useful and believe to be beautiful,” and this might well be applied to the sickroom.

Should you be unfortunate enough to find the room furnished with upholstered furniture, and cannot “gently persuade” its removal, at least have it covered with cool linen or dainty cretonne to rest the eyes with its freshness.

The nurse herself should be clothed in the cleanest of uniforms. This is not always easy with the work of the sickroom, especially bathing, rubbing, and bedmaking, in the hot, moist weather. How would it answer to keep two uniforms going, changing after the heavy morning's work is finished, so that you will look and feel cool and fresh for the balance of the day?

Another thought that I have found helpful is to bathe the hands for a moment in cool water before attending to the needs of the invalid, as it adds greatly to the patient's comfort not to be touched with hot, sticky hands.

I grant you that I am multiplying work for the nurse by these extra comforts for the patient, but at all times we must be loyal to our profession and do our utmost for our patient's weal; and the nurse will enter but few households where the family and friends will not come bravely to the front to give her all the assistance in their power for the sake of the loved one who is passing through the discipline of suffering. Gladly will they supply an extra amount of clean linen, assist in the changing of beds, and in many ways relieve the nurse, so that she may not be overtired, if she for her part approaches them half way, and shows, in a quiet, tactful, ladylike manner, that she is without doubt the "angel unawares" in the household.

Cooling drinks may be devised in great variety and with comparatively little trouble. One of my patients told me she used to listen eagerly for the tinkling of ice against the glass on its way upstairs with joyful anticipation.

One of the most satisfactory of these cooling drinks between meals consists of orange- or lemon-juice, either together or separately, in a glass with cracked ice and then filled up with Vichy.

Electric fans are a boon in the sickroom, and many times the quiet, slow waving of a large fan, guided so that the breeze will really be felt by the invalid (which is not always the case), will carry with it an invitation to rest and sleep.

(To be continued.)

THE WORK OF A VICTORIAN ORDER NURSE IN FORT FRANCES, ONTARIO

BY A VICTORIAN ORDER NURSE

FORT FRANCES, a small town at which a Victorian Order post is established, is half way between Port Arthur and Winnipeg. Until the beginning of the winter of 1901-2 the town was completely isolated for at least seven months of the year, as the nearest railway station was Rat Portage, a distance of one hundred and sixty miles, to reach which one was compelled to go by stage and over the ice on Rainy River and the Lake of the Woods. So the month of May was gladly welcomed by all, because then the boats began to run. However, since the Canadian